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By Mr. T O W N,
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— — — *Post cineres gloria sera venit.* MART.

To Mr. T O W N.

SIR!



AM a rich old bachelor, and like other ancient gentlemen of that order, am very fond of being indulged in all my odd humours, and always having my own way. This is one reason I never married, for if my wife had been a shrewish termagant, she would have killed me, and if she had been a tame domestic animal I should have killed her: but the way of life I have now fallen into is of all others the best calculated to gratify my fantastical temper. I have no near relation indeed to treat as an humble cousin all my life, in hopes of being happy at my death; yet I abound in sycophants and followers, all whom I delude,

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like

like another *Volpone*, with the expectations of being made my heir. The abject spirit of these wretches flatters me, and amuses me. I am indolent and hate contradiction, and can safely say that not one of my acquaintance has contradicted me for these seven years. There is not one of them but would be glad if I would spit in his face, or rejoice at a kick of the breech from me, if they thought I meant it as a token of my familiarity. When I am grave, they appear as dull as mutes at a funeral; when I smile, they grin like monkeys; when I tell a silly story, they chuckle over every ridiculous particular, and shake their sides in admiration of my wit. Sometimes I pretend to be short-sighted, and then not one of them sees farther than his nose. They swallow four wine, eat musty victuals, and are proud to ride in my old boots.

I HAVE been told of a certain prelate, who brought his chaplains to such a degree of servility, that after every deal at whist, they would ask him, what he would chuse to have for trumps next deal? I keep my fellows in equal good order. They all think me a close old hunk, and imagining that winning their money will put me in good humour with them, they practice all the arts of sharpening to cheat themselves. I have known them pack the cards at Whist, that I might hold all the four honours in my own hand; they will load the dice in my favour at Hazard; pocket themselves on purpose at Billiards; and at Bowls if any one is near winning the game, he never fails in the next cast to mistake his bias. It is impossible for the most despotic monarch to be more absolute over his subjects, than I am over these slaves and sycophants. Yet in spite of all their endeavours to oblige me, I most heartily despise them, and have already

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ready drawn up a will, in which I have bequeathed to each of them a shilling and a dog-collar.

BUT though I have settled in my mind what legacies I shall leave them, I have not thoroughly resolved in what manner I shall dispose of the bulk of my estate. Indeed I am fully determined, like most other wealthy bachelors, either to leave my fortune to some ostentatious pious uses, or to persons, whom I have never seen, and for whose characters I have not the least regard or esteem. To speak sincerely, ostentation carries away my whole heart: but then it is a little difficult to find out a new object to indulge my vanity, whilst I am on this side the grave; by securing to me a certain prospect of posthumous fame, which is always so agreeable to living pride.

THE hospitals are so numerous that my name will be lost among those more known and established of *Guy, Morden, Bancroft*, and I know not who. Besides in the space of four or five centuries perhaps it may be thought, notwithstanding my whole length picture and statue, that I had assistance from parliament. If I order my money to be laid out in churches, they will never be built. If in temples, gardens, lakes, obelisks, and serpentine rivers; the next generation of the sons of Taste will demolish all my works, turn my rounds into squares, and my squares into rounds, and not leave even my bust, although it were cast in plaister of *Paris* by Mr. *Racstrow*, or worked up in wax by Mr. *Goupy*. Or supposing in imitation of some of my predecessors, I were to bequeath my fortune to my housekeeper, and recommend her in my will as a pattern of virtue, diligence, and every good quality, what will be the effect? In three weeks
after

after my death she will marry an *Irishman*, and I shall not even enjoy my monument and marble perriwig in *Westminster-Abby*.

NOTHING perplexes me so much as the disposal of my money by my last will and testament. While I am living, it procures the most servile compliance with all my whims from my sycophants, and several other conveniences: but I would fain buy fame with it after my death. Do but instruct me, how I may lay it out in the most valuable purchases of this sort, only discover some new object of charity, and perhaps I may bequeath you a round sum of money for your advice.

I am,

S I R,

Your humble Servant,

THOMAS VAINALL.

It is said by an old poet, that no man's life can be called happy or unhappy till his death: in like manner I have often thought that no words or actions are a better comment on a person's temper and disposition, than his last will and testament. This is a true portraiture of himself drawn at full length by his own hand, in which the painting is commonly very lively, and the features very strongly marked. In the discharge of this solemn act, people sign and seal themselves, either wise and good characters, or villains and fools: and any person that makes a ridiculous will, and bequeaths his money to frivolous uses, only takes a great deal of pains, like *Dogberry* in the play, "that he may be set
" down an ass."

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THE love of fame governs our actions more universally than any other passion. All the rest gradually drop off, but this runs through our whole lives. This perhaps is one of the chief inducements that influences wealthy persons to bequeath their possessions to ostentatious uses, and they would as willingly lay out a considerable sum in buying a great name (if possible) at their deaths, as they would bestow it on the purchase of a coat of heraldry during their lives. They are pleased with leaving some memorial of their existence behind them, and to perpetuate the remembrance of themselves by the application of their money to some vain-glorious purposes; though the good gentlemen never did one act to make themselves remarkable, or laid out a single shilling in a laudable manner, while they lived. If an *Apotheosis* were to be bought, how many rich scoundrels would be deified after their deaths! not a plumb in the city but would purchase this imaginary godship, as readily as he paid for his freedom at his first setting up; and I doubt not but this fantastical distinction would be more frequent on an escutcheon, than a coronet.

THE disposal of our fortunes by our last will should be considered as the discharge of a sacred trust, which we should endeavour to execute in a just manner; and as we have had the enjoyment of rich possessions, we ought carefully to provide that they may devolve to those, who have the most natural claim to them. They who may first demand our favour, are those who are allied to us by the ties of blood: next to these stand those persons to whom we are connected by friendship: and next to our friends and relations, mankind in general. But the humanity of a testator will not be thought very extensive, though it reaches

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to posterity, or includes the poor in general, if it neglects the objects of charity immediately under his eye, or those individuals who have the best title to his benevolence. *Virgil* has placed those rich men, who bestowed none of their wealth on their relations, among the chief personages in his Hell. Wherefore I would advise my good correspondent *Mr. Vainall* first to consider, whether he has not some poor relation, starving perhaps in some distant part of the kingdom: after that let him look round, whether he has not some friends, whom he may possibly relieve from misery and distress. But if he has no relation, nor no person in the world that has any regard for him, before he begins to endow a college or found an hospital, I should take it as a particular favour if he would leave his money to me, and will promise to immortalize his memory in the *Connoisseur*.